

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

**Monarchy plays key role  
in capitalist rule in the UK**

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 86/NO. 35 SEPTEMBER 26, 2022

## White House war on constitutional freedoms is key issue in US today

BY TERRY EVANS

Constitutional freedoms won in blood that are essential for working people are under a concerted assault today from President Joseph Biden's White House, using the Justice Department, anti-working-class laws like the Espionage Act, and the FBI, Washington's political police, to spearhead the attack.

In recent Biden speeches, press conferences by congressional Democrats and Never-Trump Republicans alike, and shrill editorials in the liberal press, the charge is advanced that former President Donald Trump is a threat to national security. And they've widened their witch hunt to target the tens of millions of those Biden calls "MAGA Republicans," who elected Trump. Biden claims they're "semi-fascists."

A way must be found to drive Trump out of politics, the administration insists, and keep those millions of workers from any further influence.

Workers and our unions have a big stake in unconditionally combating every assault on constitutional freedom,

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## Rail workers battle bosses over deadly job conditions

Bosses threaten lockout, demand gov't intervene



Militant/Samir Hazboun

Rail workers rally Sept. 10 in Toledo, part of nationwide fight for new contract, including end to attacks on crew size, unlivable work schedules, and for pay hikes to keep up with inflation.

BY JOE SWANSON

LINCOLN, Neb. — Amid ongoing negotiations in Washington for a national contract between the main rail unions and bosses, two rail workers were killed on the job Sept. 8. The two were on a Union Pacific freight train that collided with equipment on

a siding near Mecca, California. The week before, Union Pacific conductor Mario Aurelio Navarro was killed in a derailment in El Paso, Texas.

The continuing fatalities show that the capitalist government's "safety" regulations do nothing to protect the lives of workers and those living near the tracks in the face of worsening conditions caused by the rail bosses' profit-driven speedup.

All work can be performed safely! No worker has to die on the job! But this is only possible if workers fight to take greater and greater control of the work they perform out of the bosses' hands. The bosses refuse to include key questions of safety in the national

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## Ukrainian forces push Putin back! Support Ukraine independence!

BY ROY LANDERSEN

Ukrainian government forces are driving back the Russian rulers' attempts to conquer and crush the Ukraine people and its independence. Kyiv's forces broke through demoralized Russian front-line troops in north-east Ukraine Sept. 6, who fled in disarray. In a week, Kyiv has retaken more than 3,000 square miles of territory that Moscow seized in a murderous offensive in May and June.

This is the biggest rout of Russian President Vladimir Putin's forces since they were repelled from areas around Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, soon after the invasion began. Putin's pretext for the invasion — that the Ukrainian government is fascist and the country has no right to exist — is being shattered by courageous resistance of working people defending the country's sovereignty.

The week before the Ukrainian counteroffensive in the northeast, Kyiv's forces edged closer to the Russian-occupied Black Sea port of Kherson. The

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## Cuba solidarity group in Puerto Rico hits FBI harassment, defends rights



Radio Cadena Agramonte

Cuba solidarity brigade from Puerto Rico holds banner in Camagüey, Cuba, July 3. In response to FBI harassment, group announced Sept. 17 protest in San Juan and 2023 brigade to Cuba.

BY SETH GALINSKY AND MATILDE ZIMMERMANN

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — In response to FBI harassment of participants in a solidarity brigade to Cuba a few weeks after they returned to Puerto Rico, the Cuba Solidarity Committee of Puerto Rico has called for a protest at the Federal Building here Sept. 17 at 11 a.m. The action also calls for an end to the U.S. blockade of Cuba.

This operation by Washington's political police is an assault on the rights of all those on the island and beyond.

From Aug. 23 to 26, FBI agents visited or called nearly 60 people across this U.S. colony who joined the July Juan Rius Rivera Solidarity Brigade to Cuba or work with the committee. Some agents claimed to be investigating "criminal activity," the breaking of

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## Gibsons victorious! Oberlin College to pay \$36 million for malicious attacks

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The Gibson family has emerged victorious in its yearslong battle against slander charges by Oberlin College — a victory for all working people.

After years of race-baiting and defamation aimed at destroying the Gibson family and their local bakery, and losing in every court that heard the family's lawsuit against the assault, Oberlin College has finally agreed to abide by a unanimous 2019 jury verdict finding the college guilty and awarding the Gibsons and their attorneys \$36.59 million.

"This has been a historic case that has attracted national and interna-

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## Join SWP effort to back workers' struggles, expand reach of 'Militant'

BY VIVIAN SAHNER

Members of the Socialist Workers Party and the Communist Leagues in Australia, Canada and the U.K. are launching an eight-week campaign — Sept. 17 through Nov. 15 — to sell 1,350 *Militant* subscriptions and 1,350 books by SWP leaders and others offering a revolutionary road forward for working people. The SWP has also launched a fund in the U.S. to raise \$140,000 to finance the work of the party.

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—On the picket line, p. 5—

Australia nurses rally for increased staffing levels, pay

Support builds for Case New Holland UAW strikers



# Yazidis fight to return home seven years after defeat of Islamic State

BY ÖGMUNDUR JÓNSSON

LONDON — Eight years after the reactionary Islamic State’s genocidal attack on the Yazidi people in the Sinjar region of northern Iraq, hundreds of thousands of Yazidis remain determined to return to their towns and villages and rebuild their lives, following the defeat of the Islamic State. However, they continue to face enormous political and military obstacles erected by the competing capitalist powers intervening in Iraq, and rival forces within that country itself.

Yazidis are an ethnic minority with their own particular religion living across northern Iraq and parts of Syria.

On Aug. 3, 2014, Islamic State forces that had seized Mosul, Iraq’s second-largest city, invaded Sinjar province, the Yazidi heartland. Some 1,300 people were killed in the first days of Islamic State’s murderous rampage. Thousands of women and children were taken to Mosul and other parts of the Islamist group’s self-proclaimed caliphate, where they were enslaved and sold, used as sex slaves and forced to “convert” to Islam.

In November 2015 a coalition of Kurdish and Yazidi militias retook much of the area, backed by Washington’s air assaults, which destroyed large parts of the town of Sinjar.

Yazidi families are still trying to find the nearly 3,000 people who are missing. Out of a pre-2014 population of 560,000, some 200,000 are still languishing in squalid camps in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, while 160,000 have sought refuge elsewhere.

“We still have our community scattered in more than 15 camps in Kurdistan and Iraq itself,” Haider Elias, president of the U.S.-based Yazidi rights organization, Yazda, told participants at an Aug. 1 online memorial of the Islamic State’s assault.

Sinjar is among the areas of Iraq under dispute between the federal government in Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government in Erbil. Both governments, Yazidi forces, the Iranian and Turkish governments and a range of militias have all been vying for influence there. As the U.S. rulers have scaled back their military intervention in Iraq, these rivalries have sharpened.

Yazidis have made efforts to move back to their hometowns and rebuild despite widespread destruction, lack of basic infrastructure and ongoing clashes between rival forces. At the beginning of May thousands were forced to flee Sinjar to camps in Iraq’s Kurdish region after the Iraqi government launched an attack on Sinjar Resistance Units in Sinuny, the second clash there in a few weeks. At least two people were killed and a dozen wounded in two days of fighting.



Rudaw/Bilind T. Abdullah

**Yazidi refugee camp in Iraq’s Kurdistan region. Hundreds of thousands of Yazidis are blocked from returning to their homeland, which they fled after Islamic State genocide in 2014.**

The Sinjar Resistance Units (YBS) were formed in alliance with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in Turkey, in response to the 2014 Islamic State attack. Over decades the PKK has carried out an armed struggle against the government of Turkey, which denies national rights to the Kurdish people of that country.

Local residents of Sinjar took to the streets in response to the assaults, blocking roads to demand all armed forces leave the region. “Please let us lead our life,” Salah Salim told KirkukNow. “We thank everyone who defended our people and land but now we do not want any armed forces except for the local police. We won’t stop till all armed groups retreat.”

Those groups include units of the Popular Mobilization Forces, a militia based among Shiite Iraqis backed by Tehran. It advances the Iranian rulers’ intervention in Iraq, which has expanded their political and military clout across the Middle East.

Yazidis have also been hit by Turkish government attacks. A June 15 airstrike in Sinuny, widely reported to have come from a Turkish drone, killed a 12-year-old boy and injured several members of his family, as well as four YBS militiamen.

In 2020 the Iraqi government and the Kurdistan Regional Government in Erbil signed an agreement that called for withdrawal from Sinjar of all forces

other than Iraqi police, with the Kurdish Regional Government having administrative control. Forces in Iraq that are allied with Tehran blocked implementation of the agreement.

In Afrin, an area of Syria controlled by Ankara-backed militias, civil war and oppressive conditions imposed by Islamist forces have reduced the Yazidi community from tens of thousands to a few thousand.

In a solidarity message to the Aug. 1 memorial of the 2014 slaughter, the Communist League in the U.K. said “working people around the world were horrified by the launch of Islamic State’s genocidal campaign against the Yazidi people — the culmination of years of Islamist terror attacks against Yazidis and other minorities in the aftermath of the 2003 U.S.-U.K. invasion of Iraq.”

The ongoing assaults on the Yazidi people “are an indictment of imperialism and its growing world disorder. The horrors visited on the peoples of Iraq, Syria and the region over decades are a glimpse of the future of all of humanity so long as this system of exploitation and oppression remains in place.”

For working-class parties in the U.K. and elsewhere, “telling the truth about the fight of the Yazidi people for their very existence is a basic duty. Nothing shows better the enormous responsibility we have to prevent imperialism’s ongoing march toward fascism and world war.”

## Discounted books for prisoners

Pathfinder Press offers books at a 50% discount plus \$2.75 shipping per order. Prisoners can mail their prepaid orders to: Pathfinder Press, PO Box 162767 Atlanta GA 30321-2767 Friends and family members can order for them online. For more info: [www.pathfinderpress.com](http://www.pathfinderpress.com)

## THE MILITANT

### Crisis of capitalism cuts life span of workers

*A shorter life span, crushing inflation, brutal work hours and a marked drop in test scores for young students are the reality for working people under today’s crisis of capitalism. The ‘Militant’ reports on the growing resistance to the attacks on workers and our families.*



Jason Redmond

Lori Spencer barred from visiting mother at Kirkland, Wash., nursing home March 2020.

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Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the *Militant*’s views. These are expressed in editorials.



# Help expand reach of ‘Militant’

Continued from front page

Along with SWP and CL election campaigns, this effort will champion and build support for strikes and other struggles of working people and our unions, help expand the reach of the *Militant* and serve as the voice of class-conscious workers, the oppressed and exploited.

And we’re asking *Militant* readers to help!

There is a growing appreciation for the *Militant*, a paper published in the interests of working people, as it proudly says on its masthead. Articles are written by union members involved in contract fights and in solidarity with other battles for higher wages and other steps to allay the scourge of soaring prices, against debilitating speedup and life-draining schedules.

“We’re not going to give in to Warrior Met,” striking United Mine Workers of America member Greg Pilkerton told the *Militant* Aug. 17. He’s one of hundreds of UMW members who have been waging a hard-fought strike against Warrior Met Coal in Alabama for the last 17 months. In Sturtevant, Wisconsin,

Gavin Decheck, a United Auto Workers member on strike against Case New Holland, spoke to *Militant* worker-correspondents. “We are fighting for a wage increase to keep up with inflation,” and for the “end to excessive overtime,” he said.

On picket lines and rallies by rail workers, bakery workers, nurses and others the *Militant* is appreciated for the factual coverage of these fights and its efforts to expand support.

The fall campaign features a 20% discount on all books published by Pathfinder, which offers hundreds of titles by leaders of the Socialist Workers Party and other working-class fighters like Fidel Castro, Malcolm X, V.I. Lenin, and Thomas Sankara. There is no better way to prepare for today’s class-struggle battles than to learn from earlier experiences and how revolutionaries were able to chart a road forward.

A key part of the campaign is the SWP’s Party-Building Fund drive. The party’s members are unionists in the thick of today’s battles, and the party is entirely financed by working people. At workers’ doorsteps, on union picket lines, activities to win support for Cuba’s socialist revolution and other social struggles, we will meet workers who want to learn



Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers Party candidate for governor of Texas, talks with rancher Ron Hollingsworth at feed store in Corsicana, Texas, July 30. The fall *Militant* subscription drive, along with SWP election campaigns, will champion the fights of workers and farmers.

more about the party and will kick in to help assure it has the funds needed to carry out its work.

“These interconnected fall campaigns will help get out the truth about workers’ struggles today, strengthen the labor movement and strengthen the Socialist Workers Party,” said

*Militant* editor John Studer. “We want to increase the number of workers, farmers and young people who see the *Militant* as their paper, and the SWP as their party.”

Join in! Contact the party or Communist League branch nearest you, listed on page 8.



Osborne Hart, SWP candidate for U.S. Senate in Pennsylvania, campaigns at Labor Day parade in Philadelphia Sept. 5.

## 1962 ‘missile’ crisis book tells story from Cuba’s side

BY VIVIAN SAHNER

Pathfinder Press has released a 60th anniversary printing of *October 1962: The ‘Missile’ Crisis as Seen from Cuba*. The full story of that moment is told for the first time from the perspective of the Cuban people, whose determination to defend their sovereignty and socialist revolution blocked U.S. plans for a military assault and saved humanity from a nuclear holocaust.

Pathfinder and the Socialist Workers Party are planning efforts to promote the book this fall. An excerpt is printed on page 8.

The author, Tomás Diez Acosta, 16 years old at the time, participated in the mobilization of Cuba’s Revolutionary Armed Forces in October 1962. He had been one of the 300,000 young Cubans who mobilized across the country to teach every Cuban how to read and

write. When he retired from active military service 37 years later, Diez held the rank of lieutenant colonel.

The immediate roots of the October crisis, Diez explained, were found in the actions undertaken by the U.S. government after its defeat at the Bay of Pigs in April 1961, where Cuba’s revolutionary militias and armed forces crushed a U.S.-organized mercenary invasion of 1,500 in less than 72 hours.

Drawing on declassified White House, CIA and Pentagon files, Diez exposes the extent of the U.S. government’s attempts to overthrow Cuba’s socialist revolution. Much of this material is made available for the first time.

In May 1961 the CIA launched “Operation Patty,” trying to put in place plans to assassinate Fidel and Raúl Castro at upcoming July 26 celebrations marking the anniversary of beginning of the Cuban Revolution. Then in November 1961 President John Kennedy authorized the development of Operation Mongoose, a wide range of planned disruptions in Cuba, which Diez documents.

Attorney General Robert Kennedy said at the time that solving the “Cuban problem” was “the top priority in the United States Government — all else is secondary — no time, money, effort, or manpower is to be spared.”

These attacks set the framework for Cuba’s acceptance of a Soviet proposal for a defense pact between Cuba and the Soviet Union in July 1962 that included deployment of Soviet missiles

in Cuba, along with a contingent of some 42,000 Soviet troops.

Moscow hoped this would provide a bargaining chip to counter Washington’s placement in Turkey and Italy of Jupiter missiles aimed at Russia.

In his chapter “The Secret and the Deception,” Diez describes the disagreements between the Soviet and Cuban leaderships over Moscow’s insistence on keeping these moves secret. From the beginning, the Cuban leadership argued for announcing the pact, insisting on the right of the Cuban people to defend themselves.

When U.S. spy planes discovered the missile sites under construction, Washington imposed a naval blockade on Cuba, stepped up preparations for an armed assault, and put its troops on nuclear alert. Moscow’s response was to order the missiles removed without consulting Cuba.

Cuba’s working people stood ready to defend their revolution with determination and courage. On Oct. 26, at a decisive moment in the unfolding crisis, President Kennedy asked the Pentagon for an estimate of what casualties U.S. forces would suffer if they invaded Cuba. The Pentagon said to expect 18,500 casualties in the first 10 days. This was more than Washington suffered in the first five years of fighting in Vietnam!

“To their positions of force, we shall respond with our firmness. To their attempt to humiliate us, we shall respond with our dignity. To their aggression, we shall respond with our determination to fight to the last combatant,” Osvaldo Dorticós, president of Cuba, and Prime Minister Fidel Castro explained that November.

The U.S. government backed down. The book is invaluable for what it tells you about the moral and political character of Cuba’s revolutionary workers and farmers.

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# Gibson family is victorious!

Continued from front page

tional attention,” Lee Plakas, lead attorney for the Gibson family, said in a statement. “The issues which resonated with the jury and the public during the six-week trial are themes that are important to our society: truth matters — juries have the power to defend families against billion dollar bullies.”

Ohio’s Ninth District Court of Appeals unanimously upheld the original trial verdict on March 31 this year. Oberlin College then appealed to the Ohio Supreme Court, but the court refused to hear it Aug. 30, allowing the appeals court decision to stand.

The original jury award was even higher, at \$44 million in punitive and compensatory damages before interest, which was reduced by the judge to comply with Ohio laws capping judgments.

“We are disappointed by the Court’s decision,” said Oberlin College in a Sept. 8 statement announcing its initial payment to the Gibsons. “This matter has been painful for everyone.” But what’s absent from this statement is an apology for what the college did wrong. Instead, it considers itself the victim.

In an email sent to college students and alumni, Ambar insisted that “this payment will not impact or diminish our academic or student life experience, or require us to draw down Oberlin’s endowment.”

Oberlin, a town of 8,000, is dominated by the college. It gets an annual tuition fee of \$61,106 from its 2,800 students, with total expenses topping \$80,000 a year. The college has an endowment of almost \$1 billion.

## What was done to the Gibsons?

What led to this six-year-long fight? On Nov. 9, 2016, a student tried to use a fake ID to buy wine, and, when that failed, shoplifted it from the store. When Allyn Gibson Jr., the grandson and son of the co-owners, followed him outside and stopped him, the student and two friends, also students at Oberlin, started beating Gibson. The police arrived and arrested the three, who happen to be Black. They eventually entered guilty pleas and were convicted.

The day after this incident hundreds of students demonstrated outside the store. Evidence at the trial showed that Dean of Students Meredith Raimondo and other administrators attended the protest and gave stacks of flyers to students to distribute and allowed use of college copiers to produce them.

The flyer said Gibson’s Bakery was a “RACIST establishment with a LONG ACCOUNT OF RACIAL PROFILING and DISCRIMINATION.” Protests continued the next day.

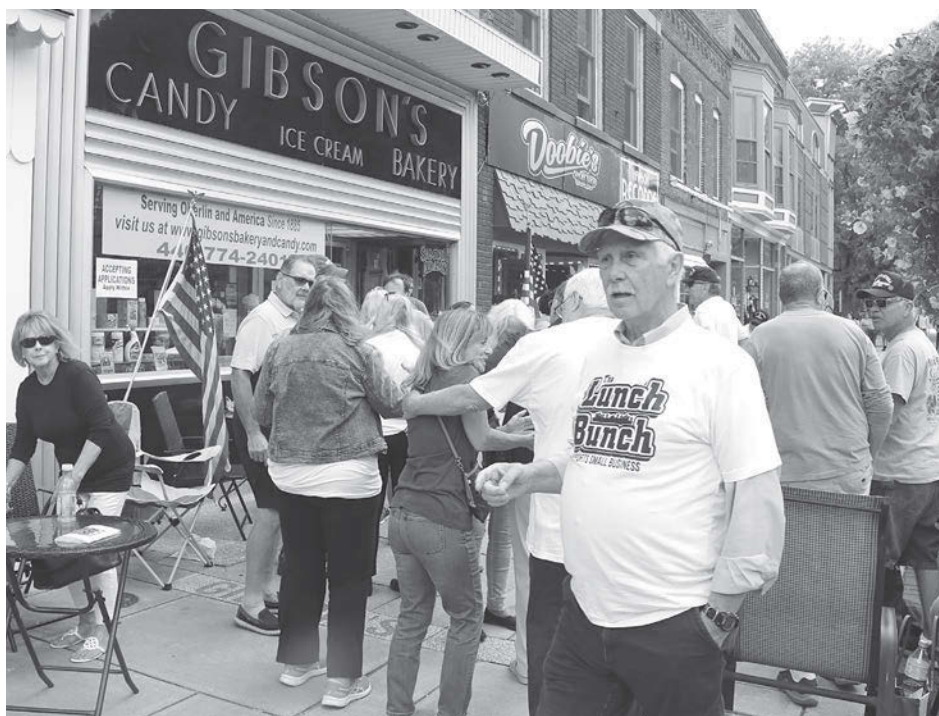
The student senate passed a resolution making the same slanderous charge against the Gibsons and it was emailed to all students. Raimondo got the college’s catering vendor to cancel the Gibsons’ longstanding contract to supply baked goods to the campus.

In a feature article in the *New York Post* Sept. 2, which originally appeared in the Common Sense newsletter, Lorna Gibson, who now runs Gibson’s Bakery, described the ordeal her family was put through by Oberlin College’s race-baiting and slander campaign.

She wrote that David Gibson, her husband, “met with the President of the school, along with other administrators, to try to get Oberlin to retract its baseless claims that we were racist, and to quell the small group of students who, in their passion, had gotten us so wrong. But Oberlin would not even consider issuing a statement and allowed the public to believe that we were in fact racist.

“Instead, the school proposed a deal where, in the future, if a student were caught shoplifting, we’d call the dean instead of the police,” she wrote, something the Gibsons refused to do. So a suit was filed against Oberlin College by co-owners David Gibson and his father, Allyn W. Gibson. Since the 2019 trial both of them died and other family members kept up the fight.

College attorneys argued that the case was simply about students’ right to free speech. But the court correctly rejected this claim. The Gibsons did not sue the



Bruce Bishop/Chronicle-Telegram via AP

Members of “Lunch Bunch” gather at Gibson’s Bakery in Oberlin, Ohio, Sept. 7 in solidarity with family’s six-year-long fight against campaign of Oberlin College to destroy their business.

students, but Oberlin College and Dean Raimondo, for libel and intentional interference with the Gibsons’ business.

## Post-trial college slanders

College slanders of the Gibsons continued for years after the court ruling. As a new class of students came in for the fall, college-authorized tour guides told them not to shop at Gibson’s Bakery and notices are still posted in college buildings denigrating the Gibsons.

On Sept. 7, about 55 people showed up at Gibson’s Bakery in a show of solidarity. The gathering was organized by a group called the Lunch Bunch. “We want to help Allyn and his mother,” Mike Bokulich, a Navy veteran and founding member of the group, told the *Lorain County Chronicle-Telegram*. They’re “sweating like mad, trying to keep the business afloat.”

# Monarchy plays key role in capitalist rule in the UK

*Given the death of Queen Elizabeth II in the United Kingdom Sept. 8, and the widespread coverage in the big-business press worldwide of the pomp and circumstance that has followed, the Militant is reprinting an excerpt from Capitalism’s World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium by Socialist Workers Party National Secretary Jack Barnes. The excerpt discusses the function of the monarchy in the U.K., which helps explain why the spectacle unfolding today is a key part of the maintenance of capitalist rule there. Copyright © 1999. Reprinted by permission.*

BY JACK BARNES

Let’s look at a final example of the contradictions between the internationalization of capital and the national borders and institutions that still divide the imperialist world — the United Kingdom. The uneven development of capitalism there, and the forms it inherits from previous periods of class society, are being thrust forward into politics in new ways by the crisis of the world imperialist system. ...

The United Kingdom was established almost 200 years ago, in 1801, when, under the so-called Act of Union, the English Parliament and Crown abolished even the semblance of a separate parliament in Ireland. Wales had already been incorporated into England for hundreds of years through military conquest, and the English rulers had imposed an earlier Act of Union on Scotland in 1707. Scotland retained its own legal system and schools, as well as its

own state church (Presbyterian), whose head is the Queen when she steps across the border into Scottish territory.

So there is more to Her Majesty’s realm than just pomp and symbol. The United Kingdom is the form of the bourgeois state — today, of the imperialist state power — with its seat in London. That is why the issue of “reforming” and “trimming” the monarchy and the House of Lords can and does emerge as an issue in bourgeois politics. It is not just a matter of pruning the state budget. The stakes are bigger.

In a capitalist state that takes the form of a constitutional monarchy, as economic and social crises deepen, the crowned head of state remains important. It becomes one of the few institutions that can “speak for the entire nation.” In a bourgeois republic without a monarchy, the president often assumes Bonapartist powers and authority un-

der such conditions. But in a constitutional monarchy, remnants of feudalism preserved by the bourgeoisie with few intrinsic vested powers — the Crown, as well as an unelected House of Lords — grow rather than diminish in their importance for maintaining stability amid the increasing brutality of capitalist life and rule. ...

So, if you take Westminster’s problems in Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, and then you add in the historic decline of the British pound and the state of world capitalism, you begin to see the strains pulling at the seams of the United Kingdom — seams that could begin to rip with a new rise in labor struggles and sustained social mobilizations, and the capitalists’ inevitable need for tightened not loosened state centralization.

The historic forced retreat of the United Kingdom from acting as an effective world power continues.

“It is only a revolution that can write new constitutions, that can put together new forms of government. Every place where the bourgeoisie tries to declare a new constitution, a new form of government, *without* revolutionary developments, the proposed changes end up in a fiasco that just make the crisis deeper.”

— Jack Barnes  
in *Capitalism’s World Disorder*

[www.pathfinderpress.com](http://www.pathfinderpress.com)

## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

### NEW ZEALAND

#### Auckland

Acting on the Accelerating Worldwide Capitalist Crisis, With Deepening Conflicts Between Washington and Beijing. Building on 50 Years of the Communist Leagues in Australia and New Zealand. Come to a meeting to celebrate steps to strengthen the communist movement in the Pacific. Speakers: Leaders of Communist Leagues in Australia, Canada and New Zealand and the Socialist Workers Party in the United States. Sat., Sept. 24. Reception, 4 p.m.; meeting, 4:30 p.m.; dinner and social, 6:30 p.m. Donation: \$20 for meeting and dinner (\$5 meeting only). Sports Lounge at the Royal Oak Bowling Club. 146 Selwyn Street, Onehunga. Tel: (021) 071-5495.



# —ON THE PICKET LINE—

## Teachers in Washington state strike over class size, pay raises

KENT, Wash. — Some 1,700 members of the Kent Education Association, the union that represents teachers in one of the largest school districts near Seattle, ended a 14-day strike Sept. 8. The new contract agreed to has not yet been released publicly. Over the past four years district officials have been cutting staff to save money and increasing class sizes and caseloads for teachers and counselors.

Some 6,000 teachers, substitutes, paraprofessionals and school office workers in Seattle struck Sept. 7-13. The issues are similar — for more special education teachers, lower class sizes and more mental health help, as well as pay raises. Teachers are also on strike in Ridgefield, in southern Washington.

Kent Education Association members voted to strike after rejecting a district proposal offering a wage increase, but refusing to address class sizes or additional mental health support. “We would love to be teaching our students right now, but the district has left us no choice,” Jes Miller, a teacher at Kentridge High School, told the *Militant* on the picket line Aug. 29. “The district staff wants to paint us as greedy because we rejected the wage increase. Of course we care about better wages, but just as important is the need for additional mental health staffing for our students.”

“I’m a special needs teacher. My classroom size cap is 10 students, which is enough,” Kent teacher Cindy Wright told the *Militant*. “The district wants to completely remove the classroom size caps. We wouldn’t be able to do our jobs. There’s not enough support staff to deal with behavioral issues that come up, and they’re not paid enough.”

At Kent-Meridian High School, Aug. 30, spirits were high. Pickets were getting plenty of support from people driving by. “The district thought the community was going to turn on us by now, but we’re getting support on the picket line,” said Colin Miller, a math teacher there.

Nearly 200 Kent School District custodians, maintenance workers and

other staff in the American Federation of Teachers voted to strike Sept. 3. They rejected school officials’ moves to divide them into “skilled” and “unskilled” and offer them a mere 2% and 1% raise respectively, far below the rate of inflation.

Join the school workers’ fights across Washington! Contact [washingtonea.org](http://washingtonea.org).

— Vincent Auger

## Australia nurses rally for increased staffing levels, pay

SYDNEY — Nurses at public hospitals across New South Wales struck for 24 hours Sept. 1, fighting for a pay raise and increased staffing in their third strike this year. This time, the NSW Nurses and Midwives Association organized rallies at 14 hospitals across Sydney, and in dozens of regional cities and towns across the state.

“If we are ‘heroes’ of the pandemic, why won’t they negotiate with us?” Kelvin Ozurumba, president of the nurses’ union branch at Canterbury Hospital in southwest Sydney, told a spirited rally of around 40 outside the hospital. “What we want,” in addition to a 7% wage increase, he said, “is safe patient care.” The rally drew an enthusiastic response from drivers in cars, trucks and buses.

Nurses are demanding a nurse-to-patient ratio of 1-to-3 in emergency de-



Militant/Bob Aiken

Nurses in New South Wales in Australia struck Sept. 1 for wage increase and lower nurse-to-patient ratios. “If we are ‘heroes’ of pandemic, why won’t they negotiate with us?” they asked.

partments and 1-to-4 elsewhere in the hospitals. Nurses in the maternity ward at Canterbury Hospital said they were often looking after six or seven mothers each, sometimes double that on night shift, and the babies on top of that.

Others told the *Militant* they face constant pressure to work overtime. “We work so hard,” Ferliza Resty, a nurse at the hospital, said. “As a mother of three I also know how expensive things are getting. We need a

pay rise as well as ratios.”

The strike came after nurses rejected an offer of 3% from the state government. The official inflation rate is 6.1% and rising, but for workers it is actually much more than that. Many food and grocery items have increased by more than 12% in the past year, electricity prices have been jacked up 18% and rents in the Canterbury-Bankstown district have increased by over 14%.

— Bob Aiken

# Support builds for Case New Holland UAW strikers

BY DEAN HAZLEWOOD

BURLINGTON, Iowa — “We are not going anywhere!” United Auto Workers Local 807 strike captain Craig Bowen told the *Militant* at the picket line outside Case New Holland here on Labor Day. “And you can quote me on that.”

“Yes, it would be wasteful if we stopped now,” fellow striker John Taylor said, explaining how they’ve been walking the line for four months and counting.

The 430 UAW members here and 600 more in Local 180 in Sturtevant, Wisconsin, voted by over 98% to go on strike May 2. The bosses are pushing mandatory overtime and 12-hour days, work schedules that wreak havoc with

family life. Workers are also fighting for wages that keep up with soaring prices and against attacks on their health plan. The bosses want to divide newer and more long-standing workers, forcing new hires to get a 401(k) instead of a traditional pension.

Since New Holland bought Case in 1999, the bosses have been pushing to cut the workforce and drive down wages and working conditions.

Andy Garr, who has worked at the plant for 12 years, described the support they have received from other workers in the region. “The workers at John Deere support us,” he said. There are a number of UAW-organized Deere plants in the Quad Cities area of Iowa and southern Illinois.

They were forced out on strike by Deere bosses last year.

“The company here tells us we have to produce more because ‘we’ are in competition with John Deere. But the Deere workers bring us water and food and drop them off at the kitchen,” the pantry that strikers and their supporters have set up in nearby Gulfport, Illinois. “The president of their local calls us regularly to ask us what we need. Workers from ConAgra have been down here, as have the nurses.”

Like other workers on the line, Garr expressed hope they could bring the strike to a successful conclusion soon. He also said that one of the things they’ve gained from the strike is that workers have gotten to know each other better. “Now I’ll have a lot more friends on the inside,” he said.

This worker-correspondent gave out a fact sheet put out by Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Local 100G, which is on strike at Ingredion in Cedar Rapids. It explains the issues there. Many of the UAW workers commented that those issues — attacks on jobs, health care and overtime pay after eight hours — were very similar.

Carl Cassiday said that he understood the company was still trying to get agreement to be able to make changes in the cost of health insurance at any time, even after the contract is signed.

“But you know we are going to win,” he said as I was leaving.

Help get the word out about the strike and win solidarity!

Contributions can be dropped off and messages and checks mailed to the UAW Local 180 union hall, 3323 Kearney Ave., Mount Pleasant, WI 53403. Messages can also be sent to [president@uawlocal180.com](mailto:president@uawlocal180.com). Contributions and messages can go to UAW Local 807, 9313 Koestner St., Burlington, IA 52601. Messages can also be sent to [uawlocal807@qwestoffice.net](mailto:uawlocal807@qwestoffice.net).

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



September 29, 1997

SAN FRANCISCO — “We raised the bar for all workers by winning this strike,” Steve Gilbert told the *Militant*. “The fact that we ended the two-tier system and won the wage gains sends a message to other workers that they can win some gains too, if they fight.” Gilbert has worked for six years as a mechanic at Bay Area Rapid Transit.

Some 2,500 Bay Area transit workers stood up to a carefully orchestrated and high-pitched campaign in the big-business press and broadcast media here to score some solid gains during their week-long strike, which ended on September 13. A ratification vote by the membership of the unions is scheduled for September 19.

“We talked to workers with more seniority about this. We won them over that it wasn’t in our interest to be divided. So we had a solid front on this crucial issue,” Gilbert said.



September 29, 1972

NEW YORK — The U.S. Committee for Justice to Latin American Political Prisoners (USLA) announced a nationwide speaking tour on Argentina in response to the recent shooting of 19 political prisoners there. USLA reports that in Córdoba alone, following this massacre of political prisoners, there were two general strikes and 600 people were arrested.

The purpose of the tour will be to publicize the situation in Argentina and to organize a campaign for the defense of the victims of the military dictatorship. Elena Rodríguez, the speaker for USLA, was a student at the University of La Plata in Argentina when the Juan Carlos Onganía dictatorship seized power in 1966.

She was one of those sentenced to prison for the “crime” of protesting and resisting military intervention on the campus.



September 29, 1947

FLINT, Mich. — General Motors locals of the United Auto Workers here have made plans to establish wholesale grocery stores in their union halls to help relieve the pressure of high food prices. Each local is buying thousands of dollars of canned food weekly and selling them at wholesale prices to their members. This proposal has evoked a very favorable response from the rank and file who really want the unions to do something about the big squeeze on their paychecks.

The short paychecks aggravate the bitter feelings of the workers. None of the fast talk about a steel shortage has made an impression. The auto workers are convinced the corporation is interested in maintaining a scarcity in order to keep prices up. Short paychecks have given rise to the demand for an immediate fight for the six-hour day at eight hours pay.



Ukraine forces push Putin back

Continued from front page  
Kremlin responded by diverting units and heavy armaments south to double its defenses, leaving its northern front lines thin on firepower. Then Ukrainian forces moved rapidly to liberate Kupyansk, a crucial rail junction, and Izium, a major supply hub. Ukrainian forces reached the Russian border 30 miles north of Kharkiv, Sept. 11.

Fleeing Russian troops abandoned tanks, ammunition and uniforms. From Kharkiv to Kherson, soldiers forcibly conscripted from Moscow-occupied Donetsk were unwilling to die for Putin. In marked contrast to the increasingly disheartened Russian troops, the morale of Ukrainian forces has been lifted by these victories. Workers are at the forefront of resistance to the invasion, volunteering for the Ukrainian army and the territorial militia. Unionists deliver bulk provisions to civilians forced to flee Moscow's occupation. Now volunteers are taking relief supplies to newly liberated towns.

In Chuhuiv, one of dozens of towns and villages freed from the occupiers, civilians welcomed Ukrainian soldiers. "Everything is going to be Ukrainian again," Natalia Khubezhova, 48, told the Sept. 10 *Washington Post*. Her husband and son are in the army. "We are all ready to go into battle!" she said.

At the same time they are leading in pushing back Moscow's invasion, working people also confront a serious assault from the government of President Volodymyr Zelensky. Since the war began it has imposed an anti-labor law allowing bosses to rip up union agreements and intensify attacks on jobs, wages and conditions. The law is opposed by both of Ukraine's national labor federations. Another draft law would allow bosses to enforce 12-hour workdays and fire workers without giving a reason.

The Ukrainian government has recently begun appealing to Russian soldiers not to fight. "Russian Ivan, surrender!" a Ukrainian soldier says on a video directed toward the ranks of the Russian army. "We will protect you from the dictator Putin."

Ukrainian troops are dropping flyers into the hands of conscripts forced into Russian-led forces from Moscow-occupied Donetsk. They say, "People of Donetsk, the Russians are using you as cannon fodder. Ukraine guarantees you amnesty and safety," it says, with instructions on how to surrender.

amnesty and safety! Your family needs you alive." It contains instructions on how to surrender. Some are responding. The Kremlin claims it is "regrouping" its forces further east and south, where it continues to occupy Ukrainian territory. It retaliated to Ukrainian advances with devastating missile strikes on a power plant Sept. 11, leading to blackouts in Kharkiv.

Divisions, protests deepen in Russia

News of the setback for Putin's invasion is filtering through state-controlled media in Russia. Pro-Kremlin figures in a panel on the state-run NTV channel condemned the government's conduct of the war Sept. 9. "We've been told everything is going to plan," panelist Viktor Olevich said. "Does anyone believe that six months ago the plan was ... failing to take Kharkiv?" Another panelist, Boris Nadezhdin, said the Kremlin's "colonial war methods" made it "impossible to defeat Ukraine."

Some backers of the invasion are clamoring for the government to im-



Ukrainian Armed Forces; map, Militant/Mike Shur  
Russian armored vehicles abandoned in river by demoralized troops in Kharkiv region fleeing Ukraine offensive. Inset, map shows area seized in a week by lightning advance. Russian-led forces, deeply dispirited by lack of support from Ukrainians in cities they occupied, departed in disarray, surrendered or deserted.



pose conscription. Putin has avoided this, knowing it would stir up wider working-class opposition to the war.

Reflecting the resistance to Putin inside Russia, over 90 municipal council members in St. Petersburg and Moscow Sept. 9 urged the Russian State Duma to remove him from power and charge him with treason. They said the war had caused massive human and economic losses and led to the eastward expansion of the U.S.-led NATO alliance.

"Putin's actions are detrimental to the future of Russia and its citizens," wrote dozens of deputies from the two councils three days later. The signatories put themselves at risk of charges under laws that make it a crime to "discredit" the Russian army. Ilya Yashin, a Moscow mu-

nicipal councilor, faces 10 years in jail for speaking out against the war. He urged other opponents of Putin to tell the truth about the war and "help people overcome their fear." Yashin is an ally of Alexei Navalny, the leader of the main bourgeois opposition to Putin, who is imprisoned in solitary confinement.

In one of many individual protests against the war, Valeria Sanina stood in Pushkin Square in central Moscow holding a placard, "Let's stop this war!" before being arrested. The Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group lists the fines imposed on individual demonstrators, revealing the wide geographic spread of the actions — from St. Petersburg in the north to Sochi in the south, from the Urals to Siberia and Far East.

Fight FBI probe in Puerto Rico!

Continued from front page  
an unnamed "federal law" or Cuban security "infiltration." Two pro-Cuba activists in the U.S. were also called by the FBI asking about the Puerto Rican brigade.

The FBI harassment is "a clear signal that our activism has had a positive effect," noted a Sept. 8 solidarity committee statement.

As soon as Milagros Rivera, president of the Cuba Solidarity Committee, learned what the FBI was doing, she sent out an alert, reminding everyone that there is no reason, legal or otherwise, to answer any questions from the FBI.

"The FBI is an instrument to perpetuate colonialism in our country," Rivera said. "They are trying to intimidate and frighten us and to criminalize our solidarity with Cuba."

Washington seized Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines, and placed troops in Cuba, after it defeated the Spanish rulers in its first imperialist war in 1898. U.S. control over Puerto Rico was later upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled that "insular laws" passed by Congress meant constitutional protections that are not "fundamental" don't apply here, because it is a U.S. colony. Puerto Rico has its own Constitution including a watered-down Bill of Rights, which does include freedom of speech, press and assembly.

When WAPA-TV News called the San Juan office of the FBI about the visits, an FBI spokesperson refused to comment, claiming that the FBI only investigates "violations of federal law" and does not target people because of their politics or beliefs.

But that's a bald-faced lie. The FBI has a long history of going after trade unionists, working-class political parties, Black rights activists

and opponents of U.S. government policy in the U.S. and Puerto Rico.

FBI agents were sent here in 1936 after a local U.S. attorney complained to FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover that Nationalist Party leader Pedro Albizu Campos was publishing "articles insulting the United States" and giving "public speeches in favor of independence."

In 1937 Albizu and other Nationalists were railroaded to prison on charges of conspiring to overthrow the U.S. government, despite no evidence that they had committed a single illegal act.

When the U.S. rulers entered World War II, Washington offered Albizu and other Nationalists their freedom if they would agree to suspend all pro-independence activity during the war. They refused.

Impact of the Cuban Revolution

In the 1960s the U.S. government launched Cointelpro — Counter Intelligence Programs — that targeted the political activities of millions of people in the U.S., including the Socialist Workers Party. Its 37 disruption operations in Puerto Rico were among the largest FBI Cointelpro campaigns.

Working people in Puerto Rico were deeply impacted by the 1959 overthrow of the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista in Cuba. As several activists in the movement told the *Militant* during a Sept. 4-6 reporting trip, the victory of the Cuban revolutionary movement, led by Fidel Castro, showed that it is possible to win real independence and to make a socialist revolution.

Washington and the FBI gave the green light to counterrevolutionary Cuban groups in Puerto Rico to go after supporters of the revolution here.

One case is the 1979 assassination in San Juan of Cuban-born Carlos Muñiz

Indonesia workers protest government 30% fuel hike



Reuters/Ajeng Dinar Ulfiana  
Thousands of people have rallied in Jakarta, Indonesia's capital city, and across the country Sept. 6 and since, demanding the government reverse a 30% jump in fuel prices it imposed amid soaring inflation in this country of 270 million people. Led by labor unions and student groups, the protesters are also demanding the government raise the minimum wage.

"These protests will continue until the government reduces fuel prices," the president of the Confederation of Indonesian Trade Unions, Said Iqbal, told demonstrators in front of the legislature. Textile factory worker Adi Asmadi, 29, told Reuters that this price increase — the first in eight years — means his daily travel expenses will go up sharply. "If the fuel price is hiked and wages increase too, that's OK," he said. "If it's not, we object."

Other actions took place in Surabaya, Makassar, Kendari, Aceh, Yogyakarta and other cities. Among those joining the protests are farmers, fishermen, teachers and domestic workers. Similar actions against skyrocketing prices have been taking place around the world, including in Panama, the Czech Republic, India, Sri Lanka, Tunisia and elsewhere.

— BRIAN WILLIAMS

Varela, a founder of the magazine *Arreito* and of the Antonio Maceo Brigade. The brigade was formed by young Cubans in the U.S. and Puerto Rico who fought for normalization of relations between Washington and Havana.

Raúl Alzaga, a former collaborator of Muñiz, is one of those the FBI called at the end of August. As a result of the efforts of Alzaga and others over decades, thousands of pages of FBI documents have been released that prove the agency had infiltrated the Cuban counterrevolutionary groups and — at the very least — knew who the assassins were and who paid them. But no one has ever been prosecuted for the killing.

When the FBI called this time, Alzaga thought they were calling to let him know that more of the documents he has been seeking for decades were being released. "But then they said no, they wanted to ask me questions about Milagros Rivera," he told the *Militant*. "So I told them, I had nothing to say."

Fighting corruption?

To bolster its claim of being "nonpolitical," the FBI's Puerto Rico website highlights its investigations of "corruption" in the government and the union movement. This includes the arrest of a number of officials, including former Gov. Wanda Vásquez, as well as officers of the dockworkers union.

"This isn't the first time that the FBI has intervened in the unions," José Rodríguez, a representative of the Movimiento Solidario Sindical, told the *Militant*. In 2004, some 60 FBI and IRS agents raided the headquarters of the Independent Authentic Union in the middle of a strike against the government-run Water and Sewer Authority in an attempt to weaken the union. The FBI claimed they were investigating fraud in the union-run health care fund. Several union officials were

framed up and imprisoned, one of whom was only released last year.

The FBI uses corruption cases like this both to go after the labor movement and to make it look as if they are defending working people, Rodríguez said. "It's important to educate working people about the real history of the FBI."

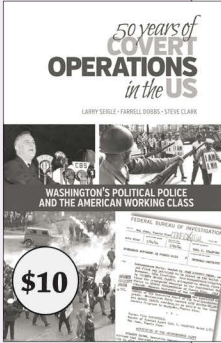
José Escoda, a member of the Socialist Front who works with the Cuba Solidarity Committee, made a similar point. "The FBI has created an aura that they are eliminating corrupt officials. The purpose is to show who's really the boss here," he said.

Escoda was one of those the FBI has approached about the Cuba brigade. "Some people think they can 'explain' things to the FBI, but if you talk to them, they will win," Escoda said. "I didn't even give them a chance to mention Cuba or the brigade. I didn't let them ask me a single question."

The Cuba Solidarity Committee is asking for messages of protest against the FBI's harassment from opponents of the U.S. embargo of Cuba, trade unions, defenders of civil liberties and others. Send them to csepr2020@gmail.com.

50 Years of Covert Operations in the US  
Washington's Political Police and the American Working Class

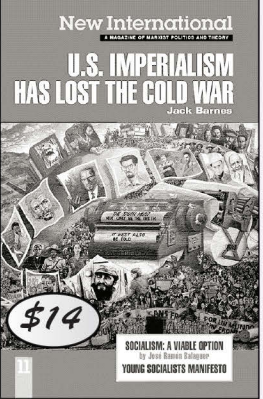
Decades of spying and disruption by FBI targeting working-class organizations and other opponents of government policies. How expansion of "national security" state used to protect capitalist rule had bipartisan backing.



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U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War

"The Bolsheviks' policy on national self-determination and voluntary federation began to be reversed from the early 1920s by the emerging bureaucratic caste led by Joseph Stalin. The USSR reemerged as a prison house of nations inherited from the tsarist empire." — Jack Barnes



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# How Cubans defended their socialist revolution in 1962 ‘missile’ crisis

The 60th anniversary printing of October 1962: The ‘Missile’ Crisis as Seen from Cuba by Tomás Diez Acosta is one of Pathfinder’s Books of the Month for September. This excerpt from the book’s preface tells how the Cuban people and their revolutionary government, backed by protests in the U.S., defended their socialist revolution against Washington’s threat of war. Copyright © 2002. Reprinted by permission of Pathfinder Press.

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

In October 1962, during what is widely known as the Cuban Missile Crisis, Washington pushed the world to the precipice of nuclear war. Scores of books on the subject have been written by partisans of Washington and of Moscow. Here, for the first time, the story of that historic moment is told in full from the perspective of the central protagonist, the Cuban people and their revolutionary government. ...

On April 19, 1961, after fewer than seventy-two hours of hard-fought combat, the Cuban armed forces, national militias, revolutionary police, and fledgling air force had dealt a stunning defeat to a U.S.-trained, -organized, and -financed mercenary invasion force of some 1,500 at Playa Girón close by the Bay of Pigs on Cuba’s southern coast. From that day on ... U.S. policy makers at the highest levels acted on the conclusion that the revolutionary government of Cuba could



Prensa Latina

Rally in New York during October 1962 “missile” crisis protests threat of Washington invasion against Cuba’s socialist revolution, confrontation with Moscow threatening nuclear war.

be overthrown only by direct U.S. military action. And they marshaled seemingly limitless resources to prepare for that moment. Under the personal guidance of the president’s brother, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, “Operation Mongoose,” with its multifaceted plans for sabotage, subversion, and assassination of Cuba’s revolutionary leaders, was unleashed to pave the way.

In October 1962, when U.S. spy planes photographed Soviet missile launch sites under construction in Cuba, the U.S. rulers recognized that the military and political costs of such an invasion were being qualitatively transformed, and they initiated the adventure detailed in these pages.

Most U.S. commentators treat the events of October 1962 as a Cold War showdown between the two superpowers, in which Cuba was at best a pawn, at worst a raging mute offstage. In that scenario the people of Cuba do not exist, nor in fact do the tens of thousands of Americans across the country who acted to oppose imperialist Washington’s preparations for a military assault.

As Diez demonstrates in these pages, however, the roots of the crisis in the Caribbean lay not in Washington’s Cold War with the Soviet Union, but in the drive by the U.S. government to overthrow the “first free territory of the Americas.” Kennedy’s acceptance of Khrushchev’s offer to withdraw the missiles — an offer broadcast worldwide

over Radio Moscow without even informing the Cuban government — was how the stand-down of the two strategic nuclear powers was announced. But it was the armed mobilization and political clarity of the Cuban people, and the capacities of their revolutionary leadership, that stayed Washington’s hand, saving humanity from the consequences of a nuclear holocaust.

Divergent political courses pursued by the Cuban and Soviet governments marked each step. The Soviet leadership, seeking a way to enhance its strategic military position and to counter the Jupiter missiles the U.S. had recently installed in Turkey and Italy, insisted on secrecy and attempted deception. Cuba took the moral high ground, arguing from the beginning for the public announcement of the mutual assistance pact and the right of the Cuban people to defend themselves against U.S. aggression.

The defeat of the invasion force at the Bay of Pigs had bought precious time for Cuba to organize, train, and equip its Revolutionary Armed Forces. Even more decisive, the people of Cuba used that time to consolidate the agrarian reform; win the battle of the literacy campaign; build schools, homes, and hospitals; extend electrification; advance social equality among Cuba’s working people; and strengthen the worker-farmer alliance that was the bed-rock of the revolution and of the respect Cuba had

earned among the world’s toilers. As they navigated the contradictory dialectic of the greatly appreciated aid they received from the USSR, the Cuban people were not only defending themselves against the Yankee predator. They stood for the future of humanity, as they stood down the power of U.S. imperialism.

And despite all odds they prevailed.

On October 26, at a decisive moment in the unfolding crisis, John F. Kennedy asked the Pentagon for an estimate of the U.S. casualties that would be incurred during the invasion they were weighing. He was informed that the Joint Chiefs of Staff expected 18,500 casualties in the first ten days alone — greater than the casualties U.S. troops would suffer in the entire first five years of fighting in Vietnam. And knowledgeable Cuban military personnel say U.S. casualties would have been far greater. From that moment on, Kennedy turned White House strategists away from their well-advanced plans to use U.S. military forces in an attempt to overthrow the revolution. The political price such body counts would entail continues to this day to hold off any direct U.S. military attack against Cuba. ...

Inside the United States, a widely promoted myth has it that ordinary Americans everywhere were so consumed by panic over the danger of nuclear attack that they, too, were not a factor during these historic events. Those of us who lived through those days of crisis as active political people, however, know the extent of that lie. ...

Small though some of these protest actions were, we never felt isolated. To the contrary, we saw ourselves as part of the immense majority of humanity, starting with the workers, farmers, and young people of Cuba itself. We knew they would never go down on their knees before the nuclear blackmail of the Yankee colossus, and we were determined to stand with them. Justice and history were on our side. Far from any sense of panic or helplessness, we were conscious that our actions had weight, that minute by minute the men in the White House were calculating the political consequences of their potential moves. Each hour they postponed invading, each day they didn’t launch a nuclear missile, was a victory. And each day our actions grew larger, and spread to more cities and towns across the United States.

**September**  
**BOOKS OF THE MONTH**

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# Fight FBI harassment in Puerto Rico!

FBI harassment of participants in the Juan Rius Rivera Brigade from Puerto Rico and other opponents of the U.S. economic war on Cuba is a serious threat to rights working people need in both Puerto Rico and the U.S.

Labor unions, Black rights organizations and all who support free speech and constitutional freedoms should unconditionally speak out against the FBI operation.

At first FBI agents tried to play the good cop. “Let’s just go have some coffee and talk.” When that didn’t work, they claimed they were investigating “criminal activity” or Cuban security “infiltration” of the brigade.

But brigade members refused to talk to the political police. For good reason. The FBI has a long history, in the U.S. and Puerto Rico, trying to disrupt any group that stands in the way of the capitalist rulers and their drive to deepen their exploitation of working people. It has spied on and wiretapped union and working-class militants. It’s given the green light to counter-revolutionary groups to assassinate supporters of the Cuban Revolution and Puerto Rican independence. FBI agents or informers have placed bombs and then blamed their dirty work on others. It’s gotten people fired from their jobs and evicted from their apartments.

“Everything we do is public,” said Milagros Rivera, president of the Cuba Solidarity Committee of Puerto Rico. “The FBI is an instrument to perpetuate colonialism in our country. They are trying to intimidate and frighten us and to criminalize our solidarity with Cuba.”

The committee will not be cowed. It’s organizing a protest at the Federal Building in San Juan. It’s already planning next year’s brigade to Cuba to join celebrations of the 70th anniversary of the attack on the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba, led by Fidel Castro, and to protest the 125th anniversary of Washington’s seizure of Puerto Rico. That assault marked the birth of U.S. imperialism and the subjugation of Puerto Rico as a U.S. colony.

Within weeks of each other the FBI raided the homes and offices of members of the African People’s Socialist Party in Florida and Missouri; Sen. Marco Rubio called for an FBI probe of Bridges of Love, a U.S. group opposed to the embargo of Cuba; and FBI agents began harassing the Cuba solidarity committee partisans in Puerto Rico. They also raided former President Donald Trump’s estate in Florida. If the political police of the capitalist government can violate the constitutional protections of one of their own, think what they will do against the working class.

As struggles by workers and farmers pick up amid the deepening of the worldwide capitalist economic and social crisis, we will confront increasing attempts by the capitalist rulers to use their political police, courts and prisons to stifle our rights, deal blows to our organizations and attempt to frame those who lead working-class resistance as criminals.

That’s why it’s important today to speak out against FBI harassment in Puerto Rico, as well as to defend constitutional protections against government interference whenever, wherever and against whoever they target.

## White House war on constitutional freedoms

**Continued from front page**

regardless who today’s target might be. Rights won from mighty battles in the First and Second American Revolutions provide vital protections from government interference with free speech and assembly, freedom to worship, against unreasonable search and seizure and more. These rights are crucial for working people whenever we organize to defend ourselves. Defending these liberties is at the center of the class struggle today.

During the FBI’s raid on Mar-a-Lago, Trump’s Florida estate, his attorneys were barred from being present to observe what FBI agents searched and what they took. In response to a motion by Trump, Judge Aileen Cannon appointed a third party to review what the FBI made off with so she could rule on the files’ disposition. Her order temporarily blocks the Justice Department from using what was seized as fodder in its criminal probe against the former president. For weeks the press has broadcast anonymous leaks, purporting to reveal shocking tidbits in the material.

Biden’s Justice Department has appealed Cannon’s decision, saying a third party review will do “irreparable harm” to “national security,” and hinder the “activities” of the FBI. For decades protecting “national security” has been a central pretext used by the capitalist rulers for unleashing the FBI to harass, spy on, smear and frame up militant workers, Socialist Workers Party members, Black rights fighters and opponents of Washington’s wars.

Democrats are desperate to keep their hold on Congress this year, and the White House in 2024. They hope that by making Trump the central issue in the election — not the growing economic and social crisis facing working people — they can win. This would open up even greater attacks on a Constitution they call racist, as well as discussion on proposals to abolish the Senate and enlarge and pack the Supreme Court with like-minded judges.

Liberals are convinced their intelligence and cosmopolitan “woke” sophistication give them authority to make decisions *for* working people. They fear the fact that more of us have seen through the capitalist two-party shell game.

### Biden’s war on ‘MAGA Republicans’

Biden used a Sept. 8 address to the Democratic National Committee to pursue his demonization of big swathes of the U.S. population, repeating that MAGA Republicans “threaten our very democracy.” Hillary Clinton demanded Republicans “purge their party of the disease.”

With U.S. Marines on either side of him the previous week, Biden told a crowd at Philadelphia’s Independence Hall that MAGA Republicans are a “clear and present danger.”

That very phrase was first used by Judge Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., when the Supreme Court upheld the conviction under the Espionage Act of Socialist Party member Charles Schenck in 1919. Schenck was imprisoned for handing out flyers opposing the draft during the first imperialist world war. The judge justified the verdict, saying “free speech would not protect a man” who creates “a clear and present danger.”

Biden’s insistence that tens of millions of working people are a “clear and present danger” throws out free speech protections and signals his willingness to unleash the power of the state against those who stand in the Democrats’ way.

A landmark decision protecting and extending the rights of all was won by the Socialist Workers Party in its 1973 lawsuit against the FBI. In one part of his 1986 ruling in that case, Judge Thomas Griesa said government appeals to “national security” cannot be used to violate constitutional rights, exactly what the FBI had done over decades with its use of burglaries, wiretaps, undercover informers and Cointelpro disruption operations against the party.

The SWP’s revolutionary view and activity were fully protected by the Constitution, he ruled.

Democrats are also opening a new round of show-trial “hearings” into the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the Capitol to advance their assault on rights. About 40 subpoenas were issued by the Justice Department last week against Trump’s associates, ordering their phones and other electronic devices seized.

This crusade by the White House is far from over.

# NZ firefighters march for wages, more hiring

**BY PATRICK BROWN**

ONEHUNGA, New Zealand — Wearing their fire-fighting gear, some 25 workers in the New Zealand Professional Firefighters Union led a protest march here Aug. 26, building support for their fight for a contract. The stoppage was part of a second one-hour protest strike by about 2,000 full-time firefighters nationwide demanding more hiring and a halt to deterioration in pay, conditions and firefighting resources.

For 13 months contract talks have been sputtering on between the union and Fire and Emergency New Zealand, a government-appointed body funded through insurance levies.

“I spend more time at work than with my family,” read one placard, underlining the overtime hours firefighters have to work to meet the rising cost of living and maintain a halfway decent service.

The full-time nationwide fire service is filled out by more than 10,000 volunteers, concentrated in rural areas, veteran firefighter John Roberts told the *Militant*. Though they aren’t organized in the union, “they will receive the benefits we win.”

Firefighters’ starting wage is a mere NZ\$1.30 above the legal minimum wage of 21.20 New Zealand dollars (\$12.90), Onehunga firefighter Chris Meredith explained. It takes two years on the job for workers to get any significant increases.

“Back in the early ’80s we had five long-ladder trucks when Auckland had 800,000 people,” firefighter Matt Akers said over a megaphone on the busy main street here. “And now we’re down to two trucks and we’re over a million people. That means that we can’t reach anyone above the third or fourth floor.”

High-ladder units can be a matter of life and death, Akers told the *Militant*. “If you look at what the U.K. went through with Grenfell Tower, one of the things coming out was the lack of aerial appliances to assist with rescues,” he said, referring to the deadly 2017 fire in London in which 72 people perished.

Firefighters picketing the Ellerslie fire station told the *Militant* of the mental and physical strain they have been placed under by Fire and Emergency New Zealand’s 2013 order making them a key part of the frontline response to medical emergencies, including suicide calls. They aren’t trained properly as paramedics to respond, they said.

On Aug. 31 the union announced it was putting further strike action on hold as negotiations had resumed under government-imposed mediation.

*Felicity Coggan contributed to this article.*

## Minn. nurses demand control over staff levels

**BY HELEN MEYERS**

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Some 15,000 members of the Minnesota Nurses Association began a three-day strike Sept. 12 at 15 hospitals in the Twin Cities and Duluth areas. They have been working without a contract since June 1. Hundreds picketed outside United and Children’s hospitals here.

“We want some control over staffing, but they refuse to have any contract language on this,” Ali Marcanti, a nurse at United and member of the union negotiating committee, told the *Militant*. “We want a fair wage increase and paid family leave.”

A major issue is having enough nurses for safe staffing. Many of those picketing explained they face too many hours and a patient-to-nurse ratio that make it impossible to give each patient enough attention. Under these conditions, many nurses have left, making the problem worse.

The nurses association is asking for a 30% wage increase over a three-year contract while the bosses have offered 10%.

The problems facing hospital workers and patients “are the direct result of the choices made by hospital CEOs who have pushed corporate health care practices onto our hospitals, with disastrous results,” members of the negotiating committee wrote in a Sept. 9 *Minneapolis Star Tribune* op-ed. Twenty-one clinics and hospitals closed in the Twin Cities area in 2020.

### ‘Militant’ Prisoners’ Fund

The fund makes it possible to send prisoners reduced rate subscriptions. Send a check or money order payable to the ‘Militant’ and earmarked “Prisoners’ Fund” to 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018. Or donate online at [www.themilitant.com](http://www.themilitant.com)